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# AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION

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## THE EVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN COOPERATION

The beginnings of Russian cooperation date from about 1865, but until the end of the century the movement was of no practical consequence, owing to the comparative backwardness of industrial society, the self-sufficiency of agriculture, Government opposition, and the low level of cultural development in the masses. The revolution of 1906 was the turning point, and since then no other country has rivalled Russia in cooperative progress. The table below shows the numerical strength of the various associations, between 1905 and 1918:

Cooperative Associations	:	1905	:	1915	:	1918
Credit cooperatives .....	:	1,434	:	14,350	:	16,500
Consumers' societies .....	:	1,000	:	10,900	:	25,000
Agricultural cooperatives .....	:	1,275	:	6,650	:	8,400
Creameries and handicraft assns...	:	2,000	:	3,300	:	4,500
Total .....	:	5,709	:	35,200	:	54,400

In the ten years, 1905-1915, cooperation became national in scope; the number of credit cooperatives increased ten fold and the consumers' societies nearly eleven fold. The total membership in 1915 was 10,238,000 households, embracing a population of over 50,000,000. The growth of credit cooperation was especially remarkable. It was the backbone of the movement before the war, rising from a membership of 550,900 in 1905 to 8,237,572 in 1915. In the same period its consolidated balance sheet increased from 60,000,000 roubles to 614,000,000. As for the consumers' societies, an idea of their astonishing growth may be gleaned from the fact that while between 1865 and 1905 only 1,580 were officially confirmed, in the next eight years, 1906-1913, over 9,500 new societies were organized. The same period marked an important revival in agricultural and producers' associations, especially in creamery butter, tar and turpentine, flax, etc. Many of the cooperatives carried on extensive educational work, establishing village reading rooms, providing for lectures, community entertainments, popular journals, etc.

During the war the cooperative movement made its greatest gains. It adapted itself to the needs of the population in the remotest parts of the country, it waged continuous war against speculation and profiteering, and it slowly gathered around itself the soundest economic elements of the peasant population. Between 1915 and 1918, the total

number of local cooperatives increased by 60%; the increase was especially great in consumers' societies. It has been estimated that by the end of 1917 over 60,000,000 of Russia's population were included in the various cooperative organizations. More important still was the rise of the cooperative federations in this period. In 1906 there were only two federations. The autocracy of the Tzar feared and hindered the coming together in national federations of the widely scattered locals for concerted economic action, and as a result many cooperative unions acted "illegally," their organizations having no legal sanction and no standing in the courts. Under the pressure of the war, the government abandoned partly its policy of hostility and incorporated a number of unions, of which there were now 68; nevertheless, nearly 200 "illegal" unions operated without government sanction during 1916. Toward the end of its regime the old government was forced, because of its failure to deal with the problems of food supply, to lean more and more upon the collecting and distributing apparatus of the cooperative societies. Russian cooperation contributed 30% to the business turnover of the country in 1916 (in 1914 it was only 7%). The shortage of goods in the markets, the breakdown of transportation, the rapid devaluation of the rouble, private speculation and profiteering forced the cooperatives to expand their activities into many fields in order to counteract the process of economic disintegration. The first act of the provisional government of Kerensky was to establish a national code of cooperative legislation, making possible their easy and unhindered organization. Like the Tzar's government, it, too, depended on the cooperative apparatus for the solution of the supply problem, and the same was true of the Soviet government. In the two years, 1917-1918, national federations for the handling of specific commodities, such as flax, hemp, potatoes, grain, eggs, etc., were set up; consumers' multiple or chain societies were organized in country and city districts for greater efficiency and economy, and many societies and federations extended their activities to include the manufacture of important requirements on a national scale.

This brief review of certain outstanding facts in the evolution of Russian cooperation would have no meaning unless supplemented by a few remarks on the inner nature of the movement. The Russian exponents of cooperation, both in theory and practice, have never limited co-operation to matters of profitable supply and marketing, but have ever thought of cooperation in terms of greater economic and social development and the enhancement of efficiency and power of adjustment to changing conditions. Cooperation in Russia has always considered itself as being essentially a form of economic organization which has emerged in the slow evolution of industrial society, coming to achieve, through the agency of concerted action inspired by the spirit of social service, what profit-seeking commercialism was alleged to have failed to achieve. Cooperation was to make the flow of goods to the market orderly and economical, and so effect savings to all alike; it was to render the business of farming more scientific and productive; and it was also to restore economic initiative of the local

communities, gradually drawing them together for wider action into district, regional and national federations directed and controlled by organized democracies of producers and consumers. Cooperation was education, and complementing the trading activities of the federation were the non-trading interests embracing special research, popular instruction, legal advice, extension service, field exhibitions, and a variety of other activities serving to raise the level of intelligence and citizenship in the masses and to train leadership in the ranks.

The statistics of recent years are omitted here for the reason that for nearly two years Russian cooperation was not a free agent. It was only about September, 1921, that the cooperatives regained their independence from government subjection and interference, and since then they have been upbuilding their organizations at a rapid rate. In point of locals, unions, membership, the present movement already surpasses the one preceding the Soviet regime of wholesale nationalization. The peasant population has not only learned well the lessons of cooperation before the revolution, but it fully realizes its advantages for supply, marketing and credit in this period of economic disorganization. Next to the subsidized government trading and industrial syndicates, the cooperative federations are to-day the strongest in the life of the country, with their network of branches and agencies in Russia, Siberia and foreign lands. As might be expected, the real business of the societies reflects the weakened economic position of the country, the low level of consumption and trade; but, relatively speaking, cooperation is playing a more important part than before the revolution, and is bound to be a factor of incalculable power in the gradual rehabilitation of agriculture, industry and trade in Russia.

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#### ORANGE MARKETING COSTS MAINTAINED AT LOW FIGURE

Owing to frost damage early in 1922, oranges shipped through the California Fruit Growers' Exchange for the season 1921-22, were only 53% of shipments for the preceding season. Returns to the growers, however, were approximately 90% of the receipts of the previous year. The combined total average operating cost of the Exchange and district exchanges was 9.5¢ per box, or 2.27% of the f. o. b. value of the fruit.

CORPORATION DOING BUSINESS IN ANOTHER STATE

As a general rule and in accordance with the principles of comity a corporation formed in one State may transact business in another on terms of substantial equality with corporations formed in the latter State. However, the various States have certain conditions and terms which the corporations formed under the laws of other States must meet before they can lawfully transact business in them. Many of the States have statutes which impose penalties for failure to comply with the statutes setting forth the terms and conditions on which corporations of other States may do business in them.

From the standpoint of stockholders or members of a corporation or association an unusual situation is presented in the case of Cunningham v. Shelby, decided by the Supreme Court of Tennessee, 188 S. W. 1147, L. R. A. 1917-B, 572. In this case it appeared that a corporation was organized under the laws of the State of Delaware. It had its office and transacted its business in Tennessee without having complied with the statutes of that State permitting foreign corporations to do business there. The corporation employed certain employees for conducting its business in Tennessee and became indebted to them. These employees in time brought suit in Tennessee against the stockholders of the corporation on the theory that they were partners in that State inasmuch as the corporation was not authorized to do business there. The case was finally carried to the Supreme Court of that State, and it was there held, as contended by the plaintiffs, that the stockholders were liable as partners for the debts in question. This case emphasizes the great importance of a corporation, whether cooperative or otherwise, complying with the laws of the foreign State or States in which it may be desirous of doing business.

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RICE GROWERS AIDED BY ORGANIZATION

The organization of the Arkansas Rice Growers' Cooperative Association was effected in 1921, and through this association the War Finance Corporation advanced \$1,128,000 to aid in handling the 1921 crop. This sum has been repaid. The general indebtedness of members of the association was reduced 35% in 1921, and 40% in 1922. As the 1922 crop is estimated at 7,350,000 bushels and prices have risen from 10% to 15% since the opening of the season, it is believed that the growers will be able to cancel 10% more of the obligations incurred during the 1920 period of depression.

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FIELD MAN TO BE EMPLOYED BY PRODUCERS' COMMISSION ASSOCIATION

The Producers' Commission Association located at the East St. Louis market, has decided to employ a field man to instruct producers regarding approved marketing practices.

WHY SOME COOPERATIVES HAVE FAILED

Data relative to 245 farmers' buying and selling associations which have ceased to function since 1913, have been compiled by the United States Department of Agriculture. Reasons for failure were stated by 234 of these associations, several giving more than one cause. These reasons may be grouped under six main headings, as follows:

<u>Cause of Failure</u>	<u>Number of Assns.</u>	<u>Percentage of Assns. Reporting</u>
Insufficient business	200	85.4
Inefficient management	148	63.2
Insufficient capital	73	31.1
Too liberal extension of credit	35	14.9
Dishonest management	29	12.3
Capital stock in hands of too few	12	5.1

The different types of enterprises included among the failures, the number of associations of each type, and the average annual volume of business for each type, was:

<u>Type of Enterprise</u>	<u>Number of Assns.</u>	<u>Average Annual Business</u>
Creamery, Cheese Factory	44	\$16,039.35
Stores	29	24,862.07
Fruit and Vegetable Assns.	27	35,675.00
Grain Elevator	21	81,461.90
Cotton Assn.	10	22,885.00
Tobacco Assn.	3	1,028,833.33
Miscellaneous	3	733.33
All Associations	137	54,147.47

The average length of life of the different types is indicated below:

<u>Type of Enterprise</u>	<u>Number of Assns.</u>	<u>Average Length of Life</u>
Creamery, Cheese Factory	70	7.69 years
Cotton Assn.	20	5.23 "
Store	37	4.78 "
Grain Elevator	38	4.39 "
Tobacco Assn.	4	4.25 "
Fruit and Vegetable Assn.	46	3.07 "
Miscellaneous	4	1.54 "
Total	219	

One hundred seventy of the associations failing were incorporated, 54 were not; 168 of the associations had capital stock and 58 had none. The number of associations incorporated, not incorporated, having capital stock, not having capital stock, and the percentages for the different types of enterprises, were as follows:

Type of Enterprise	Not Inc.	Per cent Inc.	With Capital Stock	Without Capital Stock	Per cent with Cap. Stock
Creamery,					
Cheese Factory	70	2	97.2	68	5
Store	36	4	90.0	35	5
Grain Elevator	32	5	86.4	30	4
Cotton Assn.	15	5	75.0	19	2
Fruit and					
Vegetable Assn.	14	33	29.8	13	37
Tobacco Assn.	2	2	50.0	2	2
Miscellaneous	1	3	25.0	1	3
Total	170	54	75.8	168	58
					74.3

In the case of 50 associations there was no property at time of failure. One hundred twelve associations were successful in selling such property as they had.

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#### WOOL GROWERS OF RANGE STATES HOLD CONFERENCE

At a conference on wool marketing, called by the secretary of the National Wool Growers' Association, at Salt Lake City, August 28, 1922, nearly all cooperative selling enterprises in the range States were represented. The purpose of the meeting, as stated, was to bring together the representatives of various scattered agencies for marketing wool in order that they might exchange experiences and formulate plans for improvement. It was believed also that the National Wool Growers' Association might be able to assist them to coordinate their efforts, although it is the general policy of the Association to allow the "movement to grow from the ground up rather than to undertake to force ideas upon the sheepmen from the top."

Several members described the organizations in which they were interested. The largest is the Jericho associations at Fountain Green, Utah, which has been in existence five or six years and handles from 800,000 to 900,000 pounds of wool annually. Its wool sold in 1922 for 40¢ a pound. In Fremont County, Idaho, wool has been sold cooperatively for over 15 years.

Few of the growers or local managers understand wool grading, and there are no uniform methods of selling. A committee is to be appointed to study the wool-marketing situation and report at the next annual meeting of the Association.

NATIONAL MARKETING AGENCY BEGINS BUSINESS

The Federate Fruit and Vegetable Growers, Inc., whose headquarters are at 90 West St., New York City, came into existence January 1, 1923, taking over the marketing machinery of the North American Fruit Exchange. The organization will act as sales agent for the cooperative fruit and vegetable associations federated with it, and it is the aim of the officers to make it a strong, stabilizing force in the distributing and marketing system. Some of the weaknesses of present methods of distribution are outlined by John F. Deegan, General Sales Manager, in the following statement:

There have been innumerable instances where excessive prices on early shipments have ruined the market for the entire season. If, instead of looking for an excessive price on a few early cars, the distributors were to start the price at a basis which would be immediately attractive to consumers, it would be found in many cases that the particular commodity would sail right through the season on an even keel and yield a better season's average to the producer.

I have in mind one large association shipping a commodity of which they control 80% of the country's crop, and before the season starts they arrive at an opening price which will be the lowest figure at which they plan to sell during the season. Undoubtedly they could ask 50% more in their opening price and get it on a few hundred cars, but they are far-sighted enough to realize that such a policy would be fatal. They ask a price on their first allotment that will cause the retailer to fix a reasonable price to the consumer. This association makes it their business to keep in touch with the consumptive demand and movement, and they raise their wholesale prices during the season, not on the strength of false speculative demands, but on the strength of the actual movement into consumptive channels, and they never raise the wholesale price without being sure that it will in no way affect the consumptive movement. The result is that during the last few years they have usually wound up the season at prices about 100% higher than their opening price; they return good money to their growers; they have few rejections; and their customers, both wholesale and retail, usually make money on the fruit passing through their hands. That's real merchandising.

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MOVEMENT TO SELL GRAIN COOPERATIVELY

A movement is on foot to form the Ohio Grain Sales Company, with headquarters at Columbus, Ohio, for the purpose of buying, selling, and handling grain and other products. The membership is expected to consist of local associations owned and controlled by farmers.

AUSTRALIAN WHEAT COOPERATIVES REPORT PROGRESS

G. W. Walker, Director of the Lindley-Walker Cooperative Wheat Co., Sydney, Australia, reports that the voluntary wheat pool in New South Wales completed its first year of operation in November, 1922. A little more than 60% of the crop was sold under the pooling plan, and the returns to growers averaged  $4\frac{1}{2}$  d. net per bushel at country railway stations. This, on the basis of exchange as of January 10, is equivalent to almost exactly \$1.10 per bushel. The 40% of the crop sold privately, Mr. Walker reports, will not average more than  $4\frac{1}{3}$  d., or approximately 99¢ per bushel.

The voluntary pooling plan came into operation in November, 1921, after a bill providing for the continuance of the war-time compulsory pool under Government supervision, had been defeated in the Australian legislature. "It was supported with confidence by wheat growers," Mr. Walker states, "despite a strong propaganda of the old Australian wheat shippers, consisting of only three or four firms." No attempt was made, in New South Wales, to secure signed contracts from growers, and none will be made during the coming season. The growers, however, have expressed their entire satisfaction with the operation of the pooling plan and it is expected that from 60% to 75% of them will deliver wheat to the pool this year.

In Victoria approximately 80% of the wheat growers have signed contracts agreeing to deliver their wheat to the Victorian Voluntary Pool. From 70% to 80% of the growers in South Australia and 85% of the growers in Western Australia have contracted with similar organizations. The present season promises to be a lean year. According to indications in November there would be not over 50 million bushels for export from the four wheat States of Australia.

Mr. Walker further states that it "has not been the object of the Voluntary Pool to corner the Australian market or any market oversea," but "to devise a simple business method whereby the crop can be collected, properly stored and distributed throughout the year." In pre-war days, 75% of the crop was sold at harvest time and went into the control of three or four shipping firms. The profits arising from orderly distribution were secured by these operators instead of by the producers. This condition has been changed by the operation of the pooling plan in the various Australian States.

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FIVE HUNDRED CARS OF LIVE STOCK FROM ONE COUNTY

Johnson County, Mo., has nine live-stock shipping associations, eight of which, during the year ending December 1, 1922, shipped a total of 501 cars of stock, made up as follows: 330 cars of hogs, 108 cars of cattle, 25 cars of sheep, and 38 mixed cars. It is believed that the report from the ninth association will bring the total for the county up to 525 cars. The largest number of cars shipped by one association during the year was 161.

SMALL-SCALE AND LARGE-SCALE COOPERATIVES IN SEVEN STATES

Figures have been tabulated which show by groups the amount of business done in 1921 by 2,130 farmers' buying and selling associations in seven of the North Central States, as follows:

<u>Amount of Business</u>	<u>Number of Associations</u>	<u>Per cent of total</u>
\$100,000 or less	1,161	54.50
101,000 to 200,000	603	28.4
201,000 to 300,000	204	9.5
Over 300,000	162	7.6
Total	2,130	100.0

There were 93 associations whose business amounted to less than \$10,000 each during 1921. These were distributed among the seven States in the following numbers: Illinois, 28; Minnesota, 22; Indiana, 15; Missouri, 11; Iowa, 9; Kansas, 5; Nebraska, 3.

The 1,161 associations whose business amounted to not more than \$100,000 each, were located as follows: Minnesota, 286; Iowa, 233; Illinois, 189; Missouri, 146; Nebraska, 121; Kansas, 94; Indiana, 92. Compared with the total number of associations tabulated for the seven States these figures represent the following percentages: Missouri, 67.2%; Minnesota, 64.7%; Indiana, 62.5%; Iowa, 53.8%; Illinois, 49.2%; Nebraska, 45.4%; Kansas, 39.0%.

Thirty-six of the 2,130 associations reported a total business in 1921 of more than a half-million dollars each. These were distributed as follows: Kansas, 11; Illinois, 7; Nebraska, 7; Iowa, 5; Minnesota, 2; Missouri, 2. One association in Illinois and one in Kansas and two in Nebraska reported a total business of more than one million dollars, each.

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LOCAL BANKS AIDING IN FINANCING COTTON GROWERS

On the last day of October the Arkansas Cotton Growers' Co-operative Association had advanced \$2,763,353.13 to its members for their cotton, all of which except \$200,000 was advanced by Arkansas banks, and the management believed that it was improbable that the War Finance Corporation would have to be called upon for any portion of the \$7,500,000 credit promised. On the same date the Texas Farm Bureau Cotton Association had advanced a total of \$3,409,473 to its members, all of which had been obtained at a low rate of interest from Texas banks. The Association officials believed that it would be unnecessary to use any part of the \$9,000,000 credit advanced by the War Finance Corporation. More than \$3,000,000 had been advanced to its members on October 25 by the Oklahoma Cotton Growers' Association.

A MILLION PACKAGES OF FRUIT SOLD COOPERATIVELY

The Door County Fruit Growers' Union, of Sturgeon Bay, Wis., marketed over a million packages of fruit during the six seasons, 1916-21. Over 900,000 of the packages were 16-qt. cases of cherries; the other fruits marketed were strawberries, currants, gooseberries, raspberries, plums, and apples. Sales of apples amounted to 8,552 barrels and 18,167 bushels. The number of cases of cherries for each of the six years follows: 31,371 in 1916; 104,758 in 1917; 32,792 in 1918; 205,453 in 1919; 188,080 in 1920; 344,695 in 1921.

Figures are available indicating the total income, and the expenses, including depreciation and dividends, for the years 1919, 1920 and 1921. The totals for the three years are: gross sales and other income, \$2,325,985.56; expenses, depreciation and dividends, \$53,431.48. This latter total, which is 2.2% of income, is made up of the following items: salaries, \$24,592.80; general expense, \$21,058.23; depreciation, \$4,404.65; dividends, \$5,333.00; miscellaneous, \$42.00.

Revenue for the operation of the Union during the three-year period was obtained from the following sources: deductions from fruit sold, \$29,036.16; gain from selling spraying materials, \$5,034.13; gain from selling packages, \$13,070.22; gain from selling fertilizers, \$2,997.74; miscellaneous gains, \$1,119.55.

The net amount received from the sale of fruit was \$2,083,422.09 and the deduction made by the Union for doing the selling was \$29,036.16, which was but 1.39% of the net selling price. The growers, therefore, received 98.61% of the net sale price at shipping point.

The Union is made up of 322 stockholders, 302 of whom are growers.

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POTATO GROWERS' ASSOCIATION REPORTS PROGRESS

The Empire State Potato Growers' Cooperative Association, Rochester, N. Y., has made definite progress during its first year of operation. Standardized grades of potatoes and cabbage were shipped under the Association's "Empire" brand; a daily market-news service was conducted during the shipping season; members were given advance information regarding the anticipated acreage of potatoes and cabbage in 1922, and the locals were assisted in increasing their membership and strengthening their organizations. The local associations affiliated to form the central association now number 25. Each local is an independent corporation with its own officers, but all marketing is done by the central organization.

COOPERATIVES DOING MORE BUSINESS PER MEMBER

The average amount of business per member is a yardstick which can be used in measuring the relative usefulness of farmers' buying and selling organizations. Other things being equal, the larger the amount of business done for each member the more efficiently and economically is the organization likely to perform its functions. If during a period of years this average consistently increases it is reasonable to presume that the farmers' buying and selling association as an institution is becoming a more important factor in the economic life of the nation.

Data are available for a limited number of associations in seven of the North Central States, namely, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, and Nebraska, for each of the seven years, 1913-1919. The figures seem to indicate that the farmers' local association is functioning on a larger scale. Detailed figures are given below.

Year	Number Assns.	Number Members	Average Number Members	Total Business	Average Per Member
1913	314	36,027	114.7	\$32,154,879	\$ 892
1914	148	15,383	103.9	13,888,110	902
1915	118	12,526	106.1	10,660,264	851
1916	188	23,555	125.2	27,514,306	1,168
1917	168	22,769	135.5	35,253,846	1,548
1918	151	22,502	149.0	33,176,454	1,474
1919	77	13,753	178.6	17,057,857	1,240

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INCREASED PRICES FOR MILK SECURED THROUGH ORGANIZATION

Organization of the Valley of Virginia Cooperative Milk Producers' Association, Harrisonburg, Va., was completed with incorporation late in May, 1922. The membership numbered nearly 600, controlling the output of approximately 6,000 cows. A survey had revealed the fact that the average net prices received for fluid milk in Rockingham and Shenandoah Counties in 1921 and the first half of 1922, were lower than in other parts of the country. The Association was able to secure increased prices of 10 to 15 cents per cwt. for June, July, and August, and to make favorable contracts for the year beginning September 1. The milk is pooled by district and by grade. Under this plan each producer receives returns according to the grade of his product, less all expenses directly chargeable to his district.

SELLS ONE AND ONE-HALF MILLION POUNDS OF WOOL FIRST SEASON

One and one-half million pounds of wool were sold during the 1921 season for its members by the Pacific Cooperative Wool Growers, at a total average handling cost of  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per pound, which included assembling, weighing, classifying, grading, and operating costs.

The association was organized in March, 1921, for the orderly marketing of wool and mohair grown by its members. It controls the wool of about 250,000 sheep, which is about 60% of the wool of western Oregon, although only about 10% of the crop of the State. It operates under a five-year contract with members for delivery of their wool. A board of 15 directors controls the affairs of the association, each district with 20,000 sheep signed up being entitled to one director. The membership numbers about 2,100 and is constantly increasing.

Wool is sacked and shipped to the warehouse in Portland where it is graded by United States licensed graders in accordance with the Federal tentative wool standards. The association is able to borrow money on its warehouse receipts and to make advances to members up to from 60% to 70% of the value of their wool in storage. About \$51,000 has been advanced on the 1922 crop.

In June, 1921, the association was ready to receive wool and during that month one-half million pounds were shipped in, followed by another half-million in July, and a similar amount later. A considerable portion of this was 1920 wool and the association expects to handle only about one million pounds for the 1922 pool.

Prices for the 1921 season ranged from 31¢ for fine wool to 17¢ for low 1/4 and braid, with the average between 22¢ and 25¢. It was found advantageous to scour 84,000 pounds of wool. This resulted in increased prices of from 5¢ to 7¢ a pound.

Through the sending of grade sheets to members, the growers are learning about grades of wool, and the manager reports that less inferior wool is being received, and that more wool is coming properly tied.

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AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES OF SWITZERLAND

The agricultural cooperative societies of Switzerland increased from 5,441 in 1910 to 8,899 in 1920, while the membership of those reporting increased from 216,733 in 1910 to 441,544 in 1920. About 200 of the societies failed to furnish information on membership. Among these societies creameries and cheese factories are most numerous, with 3,519 in 1920; various breeding societies come next with 2,109 in 1920; animal insurance societies number 1,359; purchase and sale societies, 772; credit societies, 266; threshing societies, 270. Lesser numbers include irrigation societies, fruit canning and preserving societies, viticultural societies, forestry societies, milling societies, bakeries, etc.